



Protect Yourself from Influenza (The Flu)

Information for People with Diabetes (either type 1 OR type 2) and Their Caregivers

If you have diabetes, you are three times more likely to be hospitalized from the flu and its complications than other people. The flu may also interfere with your blood glucose levels.

But there are steps you can take to protect yourself.

- Get a flu shot! It's the single best way to protect yourself against the flu.
- Take prescription flu medicine when your health care provider prescribes it.
- Follow special [sick day](#) rules for people with diabetes.
- Take everyday steps to protect your health.

People with diabetes should talk with their health care provider **now** to discuss preventing and treating the flu. People infected with the flu can pass it on to others a day or two **before** any symptoms appear. That's why it is important to make sure the people around you get a flu shot as well.

A flu shot is the single best way to protect yourself against the flu.

The vaccine is safe and effective. It has been given safely to hundreds of millions of people. You should get the flu **shot vaccine** and not the nasal spray type of vaccine.

Everyone ages 6 months and older should get the flu shot unless told otherwise by a health care provider, **especially** people with diabetes. The flu shot is given with a needle, usually in the arm. The vaccine used in the shot is made from killed virus. You cannot get the flu from the flu shot. A few people may be sore or notice some redness or swelling where the shot was given or have a mild fever. For more information about possible reactions, go to www.cdc.gov/flu.

Pneumococcal vaccine is also recommended for people with diabetes. One possible complication of flu can be pneumonia. A pneumonia (pneumococcal) vaccine should also be part of a diabetes management plan. Talk to your health care provider for more information on getting both vaccines.

Also see [Recommended Immunizations for Adults](#)

Take prescription flu medicine (antiviral medication) when your health care provider prescribes it.

If you get sick, prescription medicine can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They do more than just relieve the symptoms. They can help prevent serious health problems that can result from flu illness. They work best when started **within 2 days** of getting sick, so talk with your doctor now about what to do if you start to feel sick, and call your doctor as soon as you get [flu symptoms](#).



Sick Day Guidelines for People with Diabetes

If you have diabetes, even if your blood sugars are in good control, and are sick with flu-like illness, you should follow these additional steps.

- Be sure to continue taking your diabetes pills or insulin. Don't stop taking them even if you can't eat. Your health care provider may even advise you to take more insulin during sickness.
- Test your blood glucose every four hours, and keep track of the results.
- Drink extra (calorie-free) liquids, and try to eat as you normally would. If you can't, try to have soft foods and liquids containing the equivalent amount of carbohydrates that you usually consume.
- Weigh yourself every day. Losing weight without trying is a sign of high blood glucose.
- Check your temperature every morning and evening. A fever may be a sign of infection.

Call your health care provider or go to an emergency room if any of the following happen to you:

- You feel too sick to eat normally and are unable to keep down food for more than 6 hours.
- You're having severe diarrhea.
- You lose 5 pounds or more.
- Your temperature is over 101 degrees F.
- Your blood glucose is lower than 60 mg/dL or remains over 250 mg/dL on 2 checks.
- You have moderate or large amounts of ketones in your urine.
- You're having trouble breathing.
- You feel sleepy or can't think clearly.

Take everyday steps to protect your health.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Have enough medications and supplies to last for a week in case you have to stay at home.

Symptoms of Flu

Talk with your doctor now about how to reach him or her quickly by telephone if you think you have the flu. Symptoms of influenza can include:

- fever
- cough
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose
- body aches
- headache
- chills
- fatigue
- some people may also have vomiting and diarrhea.



People may be infected with the flu and have some symptoms without a fever.

How does diabetes affect how I respond to a cold or flu?

- Being sick can cause changes in your blood sugars. Also, illness can prevent you from eating properly, which further affects blood glucose.
- In addition, sometimes diabetes can make it more difficult for you to handle an infection like the flu. People with diabetes who come down with the flu may become very sick and may even have to go to a hospital. You can help keep yourself from getting the flu by getting a flu shot every year. Everyone with diabetes (type 1 OR type 2)—even pregnant women—should get a yearly flu shot. The best time to get one is now. The flu season often doesn't peak until February or even later. It takes several weeks for the shot offers its best protection, so don't delay . . . get your flu shot now!

For More Information:

- [Flu and People with Diabetes](#) and [Flu.gov](#) Web sites or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.
- [Diabetes and the Flu](#)
- [People at High Risk of Developing Flu Related Complications](#)
- [Pneumococcal Vaccination](#)
- [People and Groups at Risk for Flu Complications](#)
- [Seasonal Flu](#)